

REMARKS

Claims 16-21 have been added above to claim the features recited therein.

In regard to section 3 of the office action, the abstract was amended in the preliminary amendment filed with the application on 10/14/2004. However, to insure that there are no problems, the amendment to the abstract is repeated above.

In regard to section 4(A) of the office action, the examiner is directed to MPEP 608.01 which recites:

"Examiners should not object to the specification and/or claims in patent applications merely because applicants are using British English spellings (e.g., colour) rather than American English spellings. It is not necessary to replace the British English spellings with the equivalent American English spellings in the U.S. patent applications. Note that 37 CFR 1.52(b)(1)(ii) only requires the application to be in the English language. There is no additional requirement that the English must be American English."

"Characterised" is merely a British English spelling of the American English word "characterized". The examiner is requested to withdraw his objection.

In regard to sections 4(B-D) of the office action, the claims have been amended above.

Claims 1, 3-5, 7-11, 14 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated Hoppe et al. (US 5,637,858).

Claims 2 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoppe et al. (US 5,637,858) in view of Atsumi (US 5,736,781). Claims 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoppe et al. (US 5,637,858) in view of Leydier (US 6,217,685). The examiner is requested to reconsider these rejections.

Claim 1 has been amended to clarify applicants' claimed invention. Claim 1 claims that the substrate has a second face capable of supporting an integrated circuit and being provided with cutouts exhibiting contact pad areas, and that the mask comprises a cutout forming a window adapted to subsequently receive the integrated circuit. The subject matter of claim 1 generally relates to a semifinished module tape **without an IC chip mounted to it**. In other words, this is the tape supplied to a module manufacturer (such as an IC card manufacturer) who subsequently attached the IC chip to the tape. The IC card manufacturer only have to mount an IC chip onto the tape, and then cut or stamp the tape to form individual IC modules. The individual IC modules can be subsequently incorporated into an IC card in a final step of the manufacturing process. In contrast, Hoppe et al. discloses in Fig. 7a production of an IC module tape with IC chips **already mounted** therein.

Hoppe et al. does not disclose or suggest a tape adapted to receive an IC chip as claimed in amended claim 1. Thus, Hoppe et al. does not "anticipate" the features of claim 1. Nor are the features of claim 1 suggested by Hoppe et al. and the other art of record. Therefore, claim 1 is patentable and should be allowed.

In the prior art reel-to-reel processes (see US 5,637,858 and US 5,989,941), the IC chip is attached at an early stage. However, a fast procedure may induce high rejection rate; which rejection at this stage is very expensive since the attached IC chip cannot be re-used anymore. The present invention provides a solution to this problem. The solution is achieved by attachment of the IC chip to the tape at the latest step possible in the process. Because of the structure of applicant's claimed tape, the IC chip can be mounted on the tape at an advanced step of the process (later than that which was done in the prior art, such as in Hoppe et al.). The invention provides a solution to increase the yield of the manufacturing of an IC module; while reducing its cost relating to rejection rates.

Though dependent claims contain their own allowable subject matter, these claims should at least be allowable due to their dependence from allowable claim 1. However, to expedite prosecution at this time, no further comment will be made.

Independent method claim 5 claims creating a contact area on a first face of a substrate tape, arranging a first adhesive means between a second face of the substrate tape and a first face of a mask tape, perforating the mask tape so that a mask window is facing the contact area, and arranging a second adhesive means on the second face of the mask tape. This method is not disclosed or suggested in Hoppe et al. In Hoppe et al. the side 43 of the band 47 might form applicants' claimed second face, but the opposite side 61 clearly does not form applicants' claimed first face. Nor do the two opposite sides of the metal band 31 form applicants' claimed first and



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second faces of the claimed substrate with the mask tape on the second face and the contact areas on the first face. The features of claim 5 are not disclosed or suggested in the cited art.

Though dependent claims contain their own allowable subject matter, these claims should at least be allowable due to their dependence from allowable claim 5. However, to expedite prosecution at this time, no further comment will be made.

Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested. Should any unresolved issue remain, the examiner is invited to call applicants' attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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12/18/06

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